

#### REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, Claims 1-20 remain pending in the application, of which claims 1, 9, and 17 are independent.

The above-identified Office Action has been reviewed, the references carefully considered, and the Examiner's comments carefully weighed. In view thereof, the present Amendment is submitted. It is contended that by the present amendment, all bases of rejection set forth in the Office Action have been traversed and overcome. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

The applicant also wishes to thank the Examiner for his courtesy and consideration in granting the interview which took place on February 3, 2005. Applicant believes that the interview was productive, and helped to clarify the differences between the present invention and the prior art.

After careful consideration of the objections and rejections set forth in the Office Action, applicant respectfully submits that as presently amended, claims 1-20 patentably distinguish over the art of record, and requests allowance of all pending claims, as discussed further below.

#### Claim rejections – 35 USC 102

In the above-identified Office Action, claims 1-14 and 17 were rejected under 35 USC 102 (b) as anticipated by Suzuki (US 1,155,896). The Examiner stated that Suzuki discloses a conduit supporting structure 172 for a small vessel body comprising a hull and a deck; and the conduit structure comprises a floatation insert block 174 for placement inside the vessel body interior space between the hull and the deck; wherein the insert block is made with a support groove formed therein for supportively receiving at least one conduit.

Applicant has further amended the language of each of the independent claims to **specify** that the support block is formed from a resiliently flexible material, and is adapted to resiliently retain a conduit placed in the support groove. This limitation is clearly supported by the original specification, including paragraph 40 of the specification.

Applicant's claimed support block is clearly different than the Suzuki's disclosed support member, in which a water trap 142a portion of the exhaust system is supported by resting in a semi-circular depression formed in the top of a support member 172, and retained therein using one or more bands 180 (Fig 16, col. 15, line 10). The support member 172 of Suzuki includes a foam core 174 encased by an external skin 176, which external skin is believed to be substantially rigid, in order to be heat-tolerant, and also to resist stresses applied by bands 180 and clamping brackets (shown in Figure 16 of Suzuki, and discussed in column 15, lines 11-15).

Suzuki fails to teach, suggest or disclose a support block formed from a resiliently flexible material as claimed by applicant. Indeed, the exhaust system component supported by Suzuki is expected to become hot during operation of the watercraft, necessitating the use of an insulator 179 between Suzuki's support member 172 and the supported water trap (Suzuki, col. 14, line 65-column 15, line 15, and column 15, lines 23-28).

Therefore, applicant respectfully suggests that the new amendments to the claims patentably distinguish over the teaching of Suzuki, and applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's rejection of claims 1-14 and 17 were rejected under 35 USC 102 (b) as anticipated by Suzuki.

Conclusion

Based on all of the foregoing, applicant respectfully submits that all of the objections and rejections set forth in the Office Action are overcome, and that as presently amended, all of the pending claims are believed to be allowable over all of the references of record, whether considered singly or in combination.

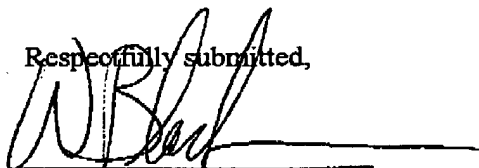
Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of record, and allowance of the pending claims.

If the Examiner is not fully convinced of all of the claims now in the application, applicant respectfully requests that he telephonically contact applicant's undersigned representative to expeditiously resolve prosecution of the application.

Favorable consideration is respectfully requested.

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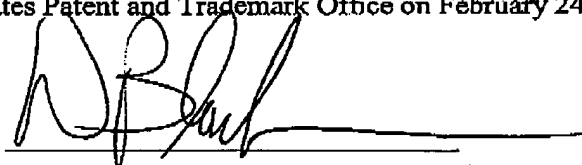
Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted, via facsimile, to Examining Group 3617 of the United States Patent and Trademark Office on February 24, 2005, at the number (703) 872-9306.



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